

# Lady Justice

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**Lady Justice** (Latin: *Iustitia*) is an allegorical personification of the moral force in judicial systems.<sup>[1][2]</sup> Her attributes are a blindfold, scales, and a sword. She often appears as a pair with Prudentia.

Lady Justice originates from the personification of Justice in Ancient Roman art known as *Iustitia* or *Justitia*,<sup>[3]</sup> who is equivalent to the Greek goddess Dike.

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Statue of Lady Justice blindfolded and holding a balance and a sword, outside the Court of Final Appeal, Hong Kong

## The goddess Justitia

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The origin of Lady Justice was Justitia, the goddess of Justice within Roman mythology. Justitia was introduced by emperor Augustus, and was thus not a very old deity in the Roman pantheon.

Justice was one of the virtues celebrated by emperor Augustus in his *clipeus virtutis*, and a temple of Iustitia was established in Rome by emperor Tiberius.<sup>[3]</sup> Iustitia became a symbol for the virtue of justice with which every emperor wished to associate his regime; emperor Vespasian minted coins with the image of the goddess seated on a throne called *Iustitia Augusta*, and many emperors after him used the image of the goddess to proclaim themselves protectors of justice.<sup>[3]</sup>

Though formally called a goddess with her own temple and cult shrine in Rome, it appears that she was from the onset viewed more as an artistic symbolic personification rather than as an actual deity with religious significance.

## Depiction

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The personification of justice balancing the scales dates back to the goddess Maat,<sup>[4]</sup> and later Isis, of ancient Egypt. The Hellenic deities Themis and Dike were later goddesses of justice. Themis was the embodiment of divine order, law, and custom, in her aspect as the personification of the divine rightness of law.

### Scales

Lady Justice is most often depicted with a set of scales typically suspended from one hand, upon which she measures the strengths of a case's support and opposition.

The Greek goddess Dike is depicted holding a set of scales.

Bacchylides, Fragment 5 (trans. Campbell, Vol. *Greek Lyric IV*) (Greek lyric c. 5th B.C.):

If some god had been holding level the balance of Dike (Justice).

The scales represent the weighing of evidence, and the scales lack a foundation in order to signify that evidence should stand on its own.

### Blindfold

Since the 16th century, Lady Justice has often been depicted wearing a blindfold. The blindfold represents impartiality, the ideal that justice should be applied without regard to wealth, power, or other status. The earliest Roman coins depicted Justitia with the sword in one hand and the scale in the other, but with her eyes uncovered.<sup>[5]</sup> Justitia was only commonly represented as "blind" since the middle of the 16th century. The first known representation of blind Justice is Hans Gieng's 1543 statue on the Gerechtigkeitsbrunnen (Fountain of Justice) in Bern.<sup>[6]</sup>

Instead of using the Janus approach, many sculptures simply leave out the blindfold altogether. For example, atop the Old Bailey courthouse in London, a statue of Lady Justice stands without a blindfold;<sup>[7]</sup> the courthouse brochures explain that this is because Lady Justice was originally not blindfolded, and because her "maidenly form" is supposed to guarantee her impartiality which renders the blindfold redundant.<sup>[8]</sup> Another variation is to depict a



The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead depicts a scene in which a deceased person's heart is weighed against the feather of truth.



18th-century Lady Justice at the Castellania, Valletta

blindfolded Lady Justice as a human scale, weighing competing claims in each hand. An example of this can be seen at the Shelby County Courthouse in Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>[9]</sup>

**Sword**

The sword represented authority in ancient times, and conveys the idea that justice can be swift and final.<sup>[10]</sup>

**Toga**

The Greco-Roman garment symbolizes the status of the philosophical attitude that embodies justice.<sup>[10]</sup>

**In computer systems**


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Unicode version 4.1.0 implemented a scales symbol at code point U+2696,<sup>[11]</sup> that may be used to represent the scales of justice.

**In art**

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**Sculpture**

	
<b>Scales</b>	
<b>In <u>Unicode</u></b>	U+2696 ⚖️ SCALES (HTML <code>&amp;#9878;</code> )



Lady Justice with sword, scales and blindfold on the Gerechtigkeitsbrunnen in Berne, Switzerland—1543



*The Justice*, in front of the Supreme Court of Brazil



Lady Justice seated at the entrance of The Palace of Justice, Rome, Italy



Sculpture of Lady Justice on the Gerechtigkeitsbrunnen (Frankfurt) in Frankfurt, Germany



*Justitia*, outside the Supreme Court of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



The Central Criminal Court or Old Bailey, London, UK



Themis, Itoiyuku, Shibuya-ku, Japan



19th-century sculpture of the *Power of Law* at Olomouc, Czech Republic—lacks the blindfold and scales of Justice, replacing the latter with a book





*The Law*, by Jean Feuchère



Shelby County Courthouse, Memphis, Tennessee, United States



Themis, outside the Supreme Court of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia



*Justice* by Diana Moore, Government Center, Newark, New Jersey



*Justitia* in the Superior Courts Building in Budapest, Hungary.<sup>[12]</sup>



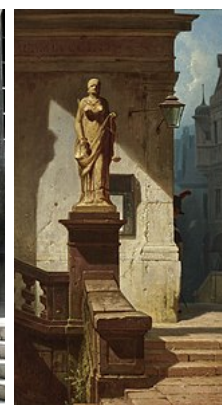
Themis, Old courthouse, Ghent, Belgium



*Justitia*, Tehran courthouse, Tehran, Iran



*Justiça*, high-relief in front of Justice Palace, Campinas, Brazil



*Justitia* (Spitzweg), Carl Spitzweg, 1857

## Painting



Fresco in the Sala di  
Costantino, Raphael, c.  
1520



Luca Giordano,  
Palazzo Medici  
Riccardi in  
Florence, 1684–  
1686

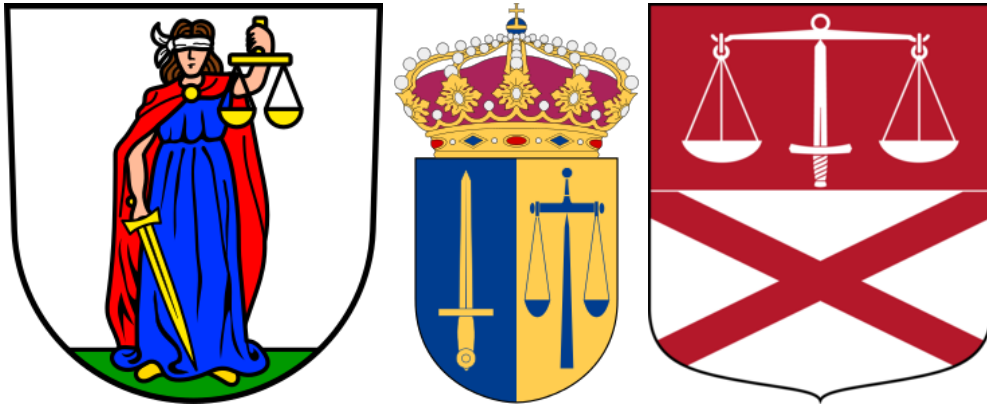


*Gerechtigkeit*,  
Lucas Cranach  
the Elder, 1537

## Heraldry

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Lady Justice and her symbols are used in heraldry, especially in the arms and seals of legal government agencies.



Justitia in arms of Ilshofen in Baden-Württemberg  
Scales balanced on a sword in the arms of a Swedish court of law



Prudentia and Justitia as supporters in the armorial achievement of Landskrona

### Justice in numismatics



Justice holding scales, \$0.50  
U.S. fractional currency.

See also

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## Goddesses of Justice and related concepts

- (*Goddesses of Justice*): Astraea, Dike, Themis, Eunomia, Prudentia, Praxidice
- (*Goddesses of Injustice*): Adikia
- (*Aspects of Justice*):
  - (*Justice*) Themis/Dike/Eunomia/Justitia (Lady Justice), Raguel (the Angel of Justice)
  - (*Retribution*) Nemesis/Rhamnusia/Rhamnusia/Adrasteia/Adrestia/Invidia
  - (*Redemption*) Eleos/Soteria/Clementia, Zadkiel/Zachariel (the Angel of Mercy)
- Durga, Hindu goddess of justice
- Lady Luck
- Lady Liberty

## Astronomy

- 5 Astraea, 24 Themis, 99 Dike and 269 Justitia, main belt asteroids all named for Astraea, Themis, Dike and Justitia, Classical goddesses of justice.

## Notable programs

- "Operation Lady Justice (Presidential Task Force on Missing and Murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives)

## In fiction

- Judge Anderson, a female fictional law enforcer and psychic appearing in the British science fiction comics 2000 AD and the Judge Dredd Magazine.

## References

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1. Hamilton, Marci. *God vs. the Gavel* ([https://books.google.com/books?id=Ox4\\_vqFCjcEC&pg=PA296&dq=%22lady+justice%22+symbol&lr=&as\\_brr=3&ei=uXb8Se-IC4GuyATIm5SPBg](https://books.google.com/books?id=Ox4_vqFCjcEC&pg=PA296&dq=%22lady+justice%22+symbol&lr=&as_brr=3&ei=uXb8Se-IC4GuyATIm5SPBg)), page 296 (Cambridge University Press 2005): "The symbol of the judicial system, seen in courtrooms throughout the United States, is blindfolded Lady Justice."
2. Fabri, *The challenge of change for judicial systems* ([https://books.google.com/books?id=AwwH0F8iC9QC&pg=PA137&dq=%22lady+justice%22+symbol&lr=&as\\_brr=3&ei=uXb8Se-IC4GuyATIm5SPBg](https://books.google.com/books?id=AwwH0F8iC9QC&pg=PA137&dq=%22lady+justice%22+symbol&lr=&as_brr=3&ei=uXb8Se-IC4GuyATIm5SPBg)), page 137 (IOS Press 2000): "the judicial system is intended to be apolitical, its symbol being that of a blindfolded Lady Justice holding a balanced scales."
3. "IUSTITIA" ([http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/iustitia\\_\(Enciclopedia-dell'-Arte-Antica\)/.treccani.it](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/iustitia_(Enciclopedia-dell'-Arte-Antica)/.treccani.it)).
4. "Apendix D: Legal Symbols of the Anglo-American Legal Tradition" (<https://archive.org/detail/s/guidetoamericanl11west/page/686>). *The Guide to American Law : Everyone's Legal Encyclopedia*. Vol. 11. St. Paul [Minn.]: West Publishing Company. 1983. p. 687. ISBN 0314732241. OCLC 9196541 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/9196541>).
5. See "The Scales of Justice as Represented in Engravings, Emblems, Reliefs and Sculptures of Early Modern Europe" in G. Lamoine, ed., *Images et representations de la justice du XV<sup>e</sup> au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Toulouse: University of Toulouse-Le Mirail, 1983)" at page 8.



6. Image of Lady Justice in Berne.
7. Image of Lady Justice in London.
8. Colomb, Gregory. *Designs on Truth* (<https://books.google.com/books?id=trgG0BAQ4xkC&pg=PA50&dq=Justice+and++%22without+a+blindfold%22&ei=c3z8Sdg9lujMBJC2uf4G>), p. 50 (Penn State Press, 1992).
9. Image of Lady Justice in Memphis.
10. Brent T. Edwards. "Symbolism of Lady Justice" (<http://peopleof.oureverydaylife.com/symbolism-lady-justice-8578.html>). Retrieved 24 February 2017.
11. "Unicode Data-4.1.0" (<https://www.unicode.org/Public/4.1.0/ucd/UnicodeData.txt>). Retrieved 2020-09-28.
12. Takács, Peter. "Statues of Lady Justice in Hungary: Representation of Justitia in town halls, courthouses, and other public spaces" (<http://www.clovekaspolocnost.sk/UserFiles/article/files/157501779302-takacs.pdf>) (PDF). *Človek a Spoločnosť*. Győr, Hungary: Széchenyi István University. ISSN 1335-3608 (<https://www.worldcat.org/issn/1335-3608>).

## External links

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- DOJ Seal - History and Motto (<https://www.justice.gov/about/doj-seal-history-and-motto>)
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